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SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE, OCTOBER 19

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11. (C) Summary. On 19 October, Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki chaired the Baghdad Security Plan (Fardh al Qanoon) FAQ) Executive Steering Committee (I-ESC) of the Government of Iraq (GoI). The Meeting featured the surprise announcement that Ahmed Chalabi would be the new head of the Services Committee, replacing DPM Zoubai in this capacity. Discussions also included a new announced strategy to return Displaced Persons and the announcement that Baghdad,s chlorine shortage has improved. End Summary.

Chalabi Appointed New Head of Services Committee

(C) PM Maliki announced that Ahmed Chalabi, the current Head of the I-ESC Popular Mobilization Committee, would become the head of a new Services Committee. The decision followed discussion which included consideration of both the Provincial Council and the Council of Ministers for the role. The new Services Committee is to have representatives from the Ministries of Oil, Trade Electricity, Interior and Defense, as well as the Baghdad Operations Command (B.O.C), the National Security Advisor, the Amanat and the Provincial Council and is to hold its first meeting under the auspices of Chalabi on 20 October, 2007. Chalabi stressed that the new Services Committee would only be effective if it was empowered with sufficient authority to issue binding directives. PM Maliki stated that the GoI needed one united point8 for Services and &that not even Zoubai8 did this.

(C) Comment: The selection of Chalabi, who has not made an appearance at the I-ESC since August, was unexpected and no mention of this possibility was made in previous discussions with NSA Ruabie nor the I-ESC Secretariat. It is as yet unclear what role the staff of DPM Zoubai, who previously was responsible for Services, will play in the new committee. The announced intended representatives of the new Services Committee are essentially the same as those who attend the actual I-ESC. End Comment.

Baghdad Province Announces Strategic Five Year Plan

(C) During discussion of the Services Committee, Baghdad Provincial Chairman Mueen al-Khademy announced to the I-ESC that the Province has successfully completed its first Strategic 5 year Development Plan that can be a guide to assisting service improvements. Chairman Mueen also announced that the Province would be holding twice monthly services meeting with officials from the municipality and relevant ministries to improve coordination.

New GoI Strategy to Return Displaced People

(C) Commander of Baghdad, Gen. Aboud outlined a new strategy, jointly devised with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, to return displaced Iraqis to their homes. The announced steps of the strategy are: 1) Use the media to highlight the new strategy and inform the public, 2) Displaced persons will register with the Ministry, 3) Ministry will provide names to the B.O.C., 4) B.O.C and MNF-I will survey relevant neighborhoods and homes to determine if they are suitable for return, 5) B.O.C will provide lists to the Ministry and Provincial Council to inform those who can return home, 6) the events will prominently covered in the media.

(C) PM Maliki, noted that Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are one of the major issues facing Iraq and that he regularly hears citizens complain about military age males illegally occupying their homes. The PM praised Gen. Aboud and the plan and asked for a report at next week's I-ESC listing the appropriate neighborhoods to begin the new strategy. After some debate between members of the I-ESC about which areas were safe enough, Gen. Aboud tentatively listed Ghazaliya, Ameriya and Sab Al Bur as areas suitable for return of the Displaced.

(C) The Ambassador stressed that the issue of Internally Displaced Persons is one of the most complicated and important sectarian issues facing the GoI and noted that the Ministerial Council on National Security had previously done extensive work to establish the conditions that must be in place before efforts could be made to return the Displaced. He also stated support for the idea that the MNF-I would participate with the B.O.C. in determining which areas were suitable for the strategy and noted that they may have a different view. (Comment. Under the Joint Campaign Plan,

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USAID is the authoritative US Government entity with regards to Displaced Persons policy. End Comment.)

Chlorine Situation Improves

(C) In response to comments by NSA Rubaie that immediate action must be taken by the Prime Minister to ensure that chlorine shipments stuck at the Jordanian border be delivered to the Baghdad Municipality, the Mayor of Baghdad Saber Al Esawi stated that the chlorine has been received, but that the lack of sufficient storage containers in Rusafa still hampers that area of the city.

PM Maliki Criticizes the Ministry of Oil

(C) During intermittent discussions about the many problems caused in Baghdad due to insufficient supplies of refined fuel products, PM Maliki commented that most of our problems come from the Ministry of Oil.8 (Note: Minister of Oil Sharistani was absent from this I-ESC. End Note.)
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